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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001291

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2015

TAGS: PREL PTER PAID PGOV CE NO LTTE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SAYS GOVERNMENT WILL ABIDE BY CEASEFIRE,
ASKS FOR LTTE TO DO SAME

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD FOR REASON 1.4 (D).

This cable contains an action request - see para 7.

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Co-chairs told President Kumaratunga ceasefire was under threat, that LTTE bore brunt of blame for ceasefire violations, but that current upsurge of violence in East required both sides to take steps. Kumaratunga said she had given orders to security forces to not attack LTTE, but that some elements might act anyway, and Karuna forces were difficult to control. She asked that Co-chairs also impress on LTTE need to stop killings.
END SUMMARY

¶12. (C) Ambassador and other Co-chair Chiefs of Mission (UK for EU, Japan, Norway) called on President Kumaratunga July 25 to discuss ceasefire issues. Kumaratunga was accompanied by Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, Foreign Secretary Palihakkara, and Peace Secretariat Head

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Dhanapala. Ambassador began by saying that Co-chairs had requested meeting because of concern about the ceasefire. Co-chair Senior Officials had mentioned this concern in their June 13 statement; Co-chairs in Colombo had repeated the concern in their July 19 statement.

¶13. (C) These statements did not imply moral equivalency between the Government and the LTTE. The LTTE were egregious offenders and bore the brunt of the blame for ceasefire violations. But in recent months there had been a series of killings--especially in the East--which had targeted people from both Government and LTTE. That situation threatened the ceasefire, which was under severe strain. The task now was to calm the situation down. The Co-chairs believed the best way forward was for the GSL and the LTTE to sit together to discuss the ceasefire. Norwegian charge Laegried had been in Kilinocchi the previous week and stated that to the LTTE, which had rejected a meeting until the Government disarmed paramilitaries such as the Karuna group. We would continue to press this point on the LTTE. In the meantime, we hoped that the GSL would do all it could to get control over whoever was carrying out the killings of LTTE members.

¶14. (C) Kumaratunga responded that the Government definitely "would not run with the hare and hunt with the hounds." She saw an opportunity of engaging the LTTE in the post-tsunami situation, and it would be foolish to "bump off"

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LTTE members. She had had "strong conversations" with the security forces and given them strict instructions. She had even taken action against some people. (Apparently a reference to the abrupt transfer last week of the Director General of Military Intelligence.) Still, she said, there could be extremist elements in the armed forces who might be acting on their own.

¶15. (C) Ambassador responded that we did not think that the majority of these incidents were being committed by the armed forces, but more likely by elements of the breakaway Karuna faction of the LTTE. The Karuna forces seemed to move about freely in the East, implying acquiescence by the security forces. Kumaratunga responded that it was difficult to control the Karuna forces in their own home territory. Nonetheless, she said, they would try to do so and would disarm such elements when they knew where they were.

¶16. (C) Kumaratunga continued that it would be much easier to take these actions if the LTTE would reciprocate. They should allow elected anti-LTTE Tamil politicians to visit their constituencies without threat, and swear off suicide bomb attacks. Ambassador said that we agreed absolutely that LTTE behavior was unacceptable and had to change. The Co-chairs would certainly continue to press this point. For right now, however, we had to lower the tempo of violence in the East and get the ceasefire back on an even keel. Kumaratunga said once again that they were committed to doing that.

¶17. (C) Returning to issue of influencing LTTE behavior, Kadirgamar mentioned the recent report on child recruitment

submitted to the UN Secretary General and the Secretary General's recommendation that there should be a Security Council Resolution on the subject with sanctions on severe child recruitment violators. Kadirgamar thought this would have a great impact on the LTTE, but there had been no action in the Council. Ambassador said he did not know the state of play, but would ask. ACTION REQUEST: Please advise state of this issue in New York.

18. (C) Comment: The President's assurances were hedged with caveats about the problem of controlling low-level elements in the military and the problems of dealing with the Karuna forces. Nonetheless, if she has given categorical instructions to the security forces, we expect they will be able to diminish significantly attacks by the Karuna forces. We remain convinced that until now the Karuna elements have been operating with at least the acquiescence of the security forces, or even being used by the forces in a dangerous game which threatens to get out of hand. At the same time she is correct that LTTE behavior has to change. The Norwegians expect either Deputy Foreign Minister Helgesen or Special Envoy Solheim to visit here next week. They will need to carry strong messages to the LTTE about the imperative to engage the GSL in talks on the ceasefire now, and the necessity to change their own behavior.

LUNSTEAD